

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Kate Roschmann, North Stonington
Re: In Support of H.B. 6355
Date: March 4, 2021

Dear Chairs and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kate Roschmann. I am a resident of North Stonington and a member of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

I am writing in support of H.B. 6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders or Warrants. I support this bill because modernizing our current red flag law is a common-sense measure that can save lives.

I am proud that Connecticut was one of the first states to enact a risk warrant law in 1999; this law allows law enforcement to intervene and remove firearms from individuals who they believe are at risk of harming themselves or others. H.B. 6355 is simply seeking to amend and modernize the law that already exists in Connecticut.

The most notable change to the current law is to allow family and household members to directly petition the court to issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order ("ERPO"). Under current law, only law enforcement officials can do this, and only after conducting an independent investigation. Family members of people in crisis are denied direct access to the red flag process because they are unable to directly request an order from the court. Those who may first recognize dangerous warning signs are thereby deprived of a chance to utilize this life saving tool. An ERPO is designed to intervene during a crisis, when time is of the essence; eliminating the middleman and allowing family members to approach the courts themselves will save precious time.

The involvement of law enforcement is an issue of significance for communities in which residents may not feel comfortable approaching the police. An amended red flag law gives them a chance to go directly to the court and translates into lives saved.

Moreover, in the case of a potential suicide, some might believe that this is private, and not a matter in which to involve law enforcement. As a military spouse, I have seen the shame and stigma around depression prevent service members, veterans, and their families from seeking help. On average, someone dies from suicide every 3 days in our

state; an improvement to the existing risk warrant law would empower family members to temporarily remove guns from loved ones who could be a risk to themselves.

Red flag laws are on the books in 18 other states plus Washington, D.C.; in 12 of those states and D.C., family members may directly petition the court. Connecticut set an example for the nation when it passed one of the first red flag laws, but we must now modernize the bill by including family and household members as petitioners. Family members already approach law enforcement seeking a risk warrant—from 1999 to 2013, in more than 40% of the cases reports originated from family members. It is therefore a logical extension of the law to allow them to be petitioners themselves. The law as written is already making a difference—one study showed it to be associated with a 14% reduction in the state's firearm suicide rate. But it has the potential to do so much more, and these changes can help realize that potential.

Please support H.B. 6335. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Kate Roschmann
North Stonington